

# CONNOISSEURS' GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA WINE



## Zinfandel



Fruit from the hoary, mature vines at the Old Hill Ranch in Sonoma Valley have yielded a three-star wine for Ravenswood in this Issue. Photographer Alan Ross has captured this stunning view of Old Hill as well as images from other single-vineyard sites in the Ravenswood line.

Well, it's January and time for the best tasting I attend all year. That would be the Zinfandel Festival run by ZAP (Zinfandel Advocates and Producers: [www.zinfandel.org](http://www.zinfandel.org)) that operates for almost a full week here in San Francisco at the end of January. Connoisseurs' Guide has been among the sponsors of this singular event for years now, and we find folks from all over the country, and even from outside of the U. S. coming up to our table and chatting about this special and unique grape. We will have a table at the Thursday evening event called Good Eats and Zinfandel, and we will be around walking the floor and tasting on Saturday when over 300 wineries present their new Zinfandels to an eager and thirsty world. Why not join us?

We have lately become great fans of the blogosphere, and we mentioned some of our favorites in print in our Year In Review comments last month. There are many more very fine sites out there, and they seem to offer something for every taste. Most of the sites we look at are professionally run and are meant to expand the discussion of wine in very thoughtful and articulate ways. One we did not mention, but do read because it has some of the most honest, down to earth writing about wine is SAMANTHA SANS DOSAGE. Samantha Dugan works for a Los Angeles wine retailer and writes about wine from her heart. Yet, it is not just that fact alone. It is that no one around can match Sam's love affair with wine when one hits her palate right. Sadly, though, she almost never tastes and generally does not like California wine.

Lately, and you need to go to her site for the whole text, she was sent a box of wine from a close friend who set out to change her mind. Here is what she said about Zinfandel. It bears reading because it rings so accurately, and, of course, agrees with what we have been saying here for years. There is slight paraphrasing here but no change in meaning. "The second California wine from the gift box was a bit tougher. My benefactor even mentioned that he was not holding out

hope that I would like it...Zinfandel, my most hated wine ever. So, I took the bottle to a dinner with a bunch of wine geeks, we popped the cork, poured the wine in my glass and...Zinfandel, the best Zinfandel I've had in like a jillion years but...sigh, just aint my thing. It was a great wine, balanced, lovely texture, extremely well made, but just was not for me."

Now, believe us, we get that last bit. Here is part of what we posted on her blog in response. "The folks who dismiss CA wine across the board do not know what they are talking about. Sure, Zin is a particular flavor and there is no shame in not liking that flavor--except that few wines in the world do better than Zin alongside pasta in red sauces or long-cooked pork shoulder napped in almost anything. But, hey, we don't like Gruner Veltliner. Some people think our palates must have holes in them. But, we love your take on Zinfandel regardless because most slams at Zin are that it is just prune juice--and that ain't so. Lord knows that we don't like prune juice and too many Zins run in that direction. Why not give a try to wines like the new Ridge Lytton Springs or the new Ravenswood Teldeschi? Keep popping those Zins. There is a whole new world out there for you and your palate."

 **87 EDUCATED GUESS Sonoma Coast 2007**

While an open and uncomplicated wine that seems made for near-term drinking, this ripe and rounded working does a nice job in conveying very sound Chardonnay fruit. Its clean themes of apples and pears come through loud and clear, and, if just a touch bitter at the finish, it is altogether easy to like at the price.

**GOOD VALUE**



**\$17.00**